

# Technical Update

## for Municipal Drinking Water Systems

### Laboratory Licensing

*The Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002* requires all laboratories that conduct tests on drinking water samples to be licensed to conduct these tests. The requirement became law October 1, 2003. The licence will be valid for up to five years. In order to obtain a licence the laboratory must be accredited for the tests they conduct on drinking water samples. As of October 1, 2003, all drinking water systems were required to use a licensed laboratory.

A drinking water testing licence only authorizes the offer or provision of a drinking water testing service that involves performing the drinking water test at a laboratory if:

- the test is authorized in the licence or is in the class specified in the licence, and
- the laboratory is specified in the licence, and
- the laboratory is accredited by the Standards Council of Canada (or equivalent) to conduct the test, or
- the licence expressly authorizes the conduct of the test.

Certain exceptions apply to accommodate geographic constraints, the availability of accredited laboratories or new requirements for the testing of parameters for which there are no existing laboratories with accredited methods for that particular test. The Act provides that the licence may be issued with conditions and there is authority to amend conditions, suspend and revoke licences for failure to comply with the requirements of the Act.

The Drinking-Water Testing Services Regulation (O. Reg. 248/03) prescribes certain conditions for drinking water testing licences and sets acceptable sample handling and testing methods.

#### **The importance of laboratory licensing**

Laboratory licensing is a regulatory process by which the province oversees drinking water testing. It involves recognizing the value of training and accreditation, setting prescriptive requirements for sample collection, handling and testing and verifying a laboratory's knowledge of and compliance with regulatory standards. It permits the province to revoke, refuse or renew a licence to allow or prohibit the analysis of drinking water samples. Laboratory licensing serves to recognize laboratories that use appropriate practices and methods that are fit for the purpose of analyzing regulated drinking water samples.

Although accreditation is a necessary step in ensuring competence in testing and provides formal recognition of the competence of the laboratory to carry out specific tests, it is not sufficient by itself to ensure compliance with regulatory standards and the use of methods that are fit for the purpose of analyzing drinking water samples. In addition to accreditation to assess technical competence, licensing provides the means of ensuring the appropriate handling and analysis of drinking water samples; result reporting according to regulatory standards; regulatory compliance through on-site inspections of laboratories; and the enforcement of

compliance through action which may include revocation of a licence. Continuing accreditation is a condition of the licence.

#### **Exemptions**

A drinking water testing licence is not required for the following persons testing drinking water samples at the site of drinking water systems, for tests listed in Section 2 of the Drinking-Water Testing Services Regulation (O. Reg. 248/03): certified operator or water quality analyst, Provincial Officer or person acting under the supervision of a provincial officer, a medical officer of health, public health inspector or person acting under the supervision of a public health inspector, inspectors designated under the Occupational Health and Safety Act or the Health Protection and Promotion Act, a professional engineer as defined under the Professional Engineers Act, or a person acting under the supervision of a professional engineer.

Tests conducted at the drinking water system by continuous monitoring equipment that forms part of the drinking water system are exempt from licensing if the analysis is for the following parameters: alkalinity, aluminum, chlorine dioxide, colour, fluoride, free chlorine residual, free and total chlorine residual, hardness, methane, odour, pH,

taste, temperature or turbidity. A licence is also not required with respect to tests conducted for microbiological parameters by in-line testing equipment that forms part of a drinking water system, if it is deemed equivalent to a testing method that is accredited.

Licensing is not required for tests on drinking water samples conducted by a laboratory purely for research or for developing testing methods, where the purpose is outlined in a written research proposal and the tests are not paid for on a fee per test basis.

#### **Finding a licensed laboratory**

The Ministry of the Environment maintains a list of licensed laboratories, including the tests for which they are licensed, on its Web site at [www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/sdwa/lablicensing.htm](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/sdwa/lablicensing.htm)

#### **For more information contact:**

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